

## **A Brief History of Nutrioso**

In 2001, the Nutrioso Planning Committee for the Nutrioso Community Plan compiled this history of our community.

Prior to Mormon settlement in 1875, the Nutrioso area was the site of indigenous encampments, primarily in the summer and autumn, with no apparent permanent settlements. Also what is now Mt. Escudilla may have been of ceremonial significance.

The early Spanish/Mexican influence in the New World was never able to bring this region under its control, although the route of Coronado's 1540 expedition for the Seven Cities of Gold is said to have passed through Nutrioso on its return journey to Mexico.

The town's name comes from the Spanish words for beaver (nutria) and bear (oso), which the first settlers were said to have found in the valley and relied upon for part of their food supply as well as for pelts for trading.

Nutrioso is one of the many small towns settled in the late 1800s and early 1900s in the Southwest. At that time, the entire West was making room for a veritable exodus from the East. Sturdy wagons with harnesses jingling, horses sneezing and heavy feet stirring up the dust brought the first pioneers to settle the region. Initially, Mormons sent from Utah to establish farms, along with loggers, trappers and hunters, built rudimentary log homes and were able to make a living along the fertile north/south trading route.

Today Nutrioso is a retirement, seasonal, and bedroom community (in relationship to Springerville and Show Low) populated by both descendants of the early settlers and folks who have come to appreciate the scenic, rural, agricultural lifestyle found in the area. The only community facilities are the (now unused) old school house, built in 1936 as part of the WPA, and the U.S. Post Office, both in the center of town. In 1989 the Arizona DOT designated the highway through Nutrioso as part of the Coronado Trail Scenic Route due to its natural beauty.

"Nutrioso has never been a large town, perhaps no more than eight hundred at one time; but it has been said by some and verified by others who have lived there, that the reason it remains small is that everyone who has lived there, love it and when they left, they took a piece of it with them." (Kelly, Nina & Lee, Alice Wilcox; Nutrioso and her Neighbors--A Treasury of Memories and Good Times, Hard Times,

Humor, Heritage: Flagstaff, AZ, 1999.)